DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 055 383 EC 040 147

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TITLE An Administrator's Suggestions for a Sample Staff Training Program Sequence in an Early Childhood Education Center for Handicapped Children. Vol. 1, No. 2.
INSTITUTION Texas Univ., Austin. Dept. of Special Education.
SPONS AGENCY Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (DHEW/OE), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE 71
GRANT OEG-0-9-53106-(031)
NOTE 18p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.65 HC-$3.29
DESCRIPTORS *Early Childhood Education; Educational Objectives; *Exceptional Child Education; Guidelines; *Handicapped Children; Inservice Teacher Education; *Institutes (Training Programs); Preschool Children; *Program Descriptions; Staff Orientation

ABSTRACT

Described is a projected 40-hour staff training program in general educational principles for personnel in early childhood education centers. Three developmental goals of early childhood educational programs are said to be: wholesome self concept, acceptable social concepts, and aesthetic concepts. Program aspects discussed are: educational analysis; evaluative or diagnostic instruments, including their administration, type of information furnished, validity, accompanying terminology, and applicability of findings to children; differences in physical ability, strength, size, agility, and coordination of preschool children; social differences of preschool children; theories of learning or thinking as applied to preschool children; school and community relations with emphasis on parental involvement; exploratory workshop for display of available instructional materials and equipment; and individual conferences for program participants. The author then recommends that 20 hours be spent working with handicapped children in general and 20 hours with specific handicapping conditions. (CB)

ED055383

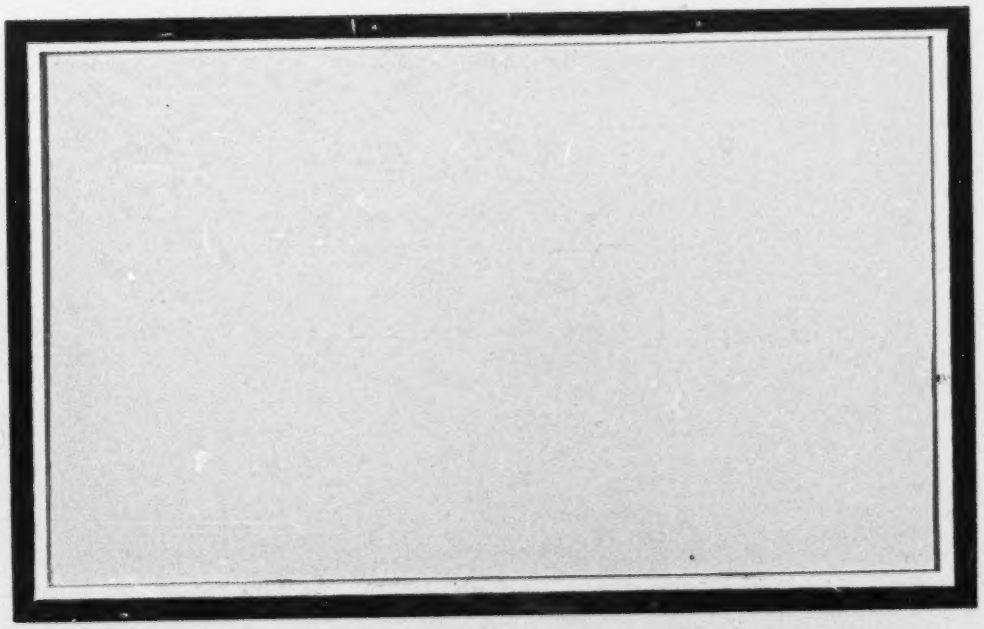
FUNDED BY: THE BUREAU OF EDUCATION FOR THE HANDICAPPED, UNITED STATES OFFICE OF EDUCATION

EC 040 147

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION FOR HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

THE DEPARTMENT OF SPECIAL EDUCATION
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

STAFF TRAINING



A MONOGRAPH

A PUBLICATION OF:
Staff Training of Exemplary Early Childhood Education Centers for Handicapped Children

Funded by a grant from the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped, U.S.O.E.
PROJECT NUMBER OEG-0-9-531306-(031)

ED055383

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

Program for Staff Training of Exemplary Early Childhood Centers

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P R E S E N T S

THE DISTINGUISHED STAFF TRAINING MONOGRAPH SERIES

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AN ADMINISTRATOR'S SUGGESTIONS FOR A SAMPLE STAFF TRAINING PROGRAM SEQUENCE IN AN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION CENTER FOR HANDICAPPED CHILDREN

By

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Vol. I No.2

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The project presented or reported herein was performed pursuant to a Grant from the U. S. Office of Education, Department of Health Education, and Welfare. However, the opinions expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U. S. Office of Education, and no official endorsement by the U. S. Office of Education should be inferred.

The task of recommending a format for a staff training program which might be adapted to the needs of the centers either planning or operating programs for the benefit of the handicapped child of pre-school age is formidable. Certain obvious problems are apparent. Among these are:

1. The wide range of training and experience offered by the personnel of the centers.
2. Time limitations upon the staff training program.
3. The multiplicity of handicaps provided for in the individual centers.
4. The differences in availability of training personnel at the different geographic locations of the centers.
5. The limitations on available funds for staff training.

With respect to the first problem, that of the wide range of training and experience of personnel, the difference in the professionally trained doctorate offered by some and the semi-literate state of others places demands upon the program to meet these two extremes. With this fact in mind, as well as the other four enumerated problems, the logical conclusion is that so much time as is available should be devoted to the development of some general principles of action vital to all categories of personnel and applicable to pre-school children regardless of the nature of their handicap. The experiences to be offered must be brought down from a highly

theoretical plane and must be couched in elemental language. Time limitations dictate that experiences must be extremely practical and, at least in the first phase of training, must be applicable to all pre-school children.

With the hope that the directors of all the centers may be assembled to participate in the prototype to be offered at the University of Texas, the writer prescribes a forty clock hour program in general educational principles from which the directors may take any part which seems to fit the personnel of their individual centers. It is desirable that the forty hours be recorded on video tape and be made available to the centers which request all or any part thereof.

There are certain basic facts common to the learning of all children and it is these which must be the substance of the forty clock hours.

Both the teacher and the learner need to know the purposes of their combined efforts. Such understanding on the part of both lends direction and purpose to their activities. Certain elements would be common to the teaching and learning aspirations regardless of the range of ability or the degree or nature of the handicap of the child. We can reach certain areas of agreement in this area and it seems that it might be advantageous to state goals very generally and then outline certain behavioral manifestations beneath these goals. Examples of such goals are:

1. Development of a wholesome self-concept.

a. Does the child recognize his voice?

b. Does he label things about himself?

c. Has he an image of how he appears to others as "strong", "good", "bad"?

d. Does he participate in dramatic play identifying himself as certain adults?

2. Development of acceptable social concepts.

a. Is his play parallel or cooperative in that it is beside others or with others?

b. Is play limited to himself, one other child, or a group?

c. Does he share items or is he selfish?

d. Can he await his turn?

3. Development of aesthetic concepts.

a. Pre-school children appear to prefer action and animals in art.

b. Pre-school children generally prefer music for relaxation.

Once goals have been determined, there is no reason to expect that centers will not reject, enlarge, substitute, rephrase, or expand them; the next step appears to be to develop a staff training program which will enable the participants to learn ways and means of achieving established goals. How may one expect to provide such training within the time limits available? With the assumption that such goals may be cooperatively ascertained within a three hour

period, we have thirty-seven of our prescribed forty hours remaining.

The structure of the centers provides for individual testing and analysis of children. Too often such testing is a sterile operation, the results of which may be topics for discussion but are seldom prescriptions for action. It is necessary that some time be devoted to a discussion and explanation of the nature of such educational analysis. This is not to say that any attempt is to be made to instruct participants in administration of evaluative or diagnostic instruments. Time must be devoted to a discussion of the purposes behind the administration of the instruments, the types of information which the instruments may furnish, the accuracy or finality of such findings or the lack thereof, the terminology which accompanies them, and finally the applicability of the findings to the subject children. Terminology must be clarified on a highly selective basis with great care being exercised to be certain that the participants are not lost in the maze of unnecessary technicality. A three hour module should prove sufficient for this facet of the program.

Six hours of time have now been utilized. The remaining two hours of the initial day should now be allocated to dealing with individual or group discussions of questions which may be raised by individual participants. All of the consultative staff should be available at this time.

The eternal refusal of professional teachers to recognize

individual differences in children of all ages as mandates for independent activity with children dictates that emphasis must be placed upon this aspect of child development at an early stage in any staff training program. Sequence would normally be expected to set forth certain areas of general commonality first; however, such a logical sequence has resulted in so little individualization that it is high time to depart therefrom. Also this is a quite logical sequential step from the previous day's discussion of diagnosis and pathology.

As the most easily discernible differences in children of the same chronological age is in the realm of the physical, it seems appropriate that a well qualified pediatrician might use the initial two hours of this second day in outlining the differences in physical ability, strength, size, agility, and coordination one may expect to encounter in the pre-school child.

The second two hour period should point out the psychological differences one might anticipate. This appears to be the area where the child psychologist should take the lead. Hopefully, like the preceding discussion, this period should not only point out the differences but should also provide some general guides for action.

The third two hour session should point out social differences one might expect to encounter in pre-school children. This is perhaps the least pure area of differences, rising quite apparently from the other two areas of differences in many instances, but,

nevertheless, one of most real consequence in the pre-school child.

Once again the six hours should be followed by two hours of individual or group conferences with the consultants to explore areas of personal confusion or concern.

With great concern and with some reservations the writer prescribes that the third day be devoted to a discussion of theories of learning as applied to the pre-school child. Great care must be exercised that this day does not become a field day for the exploitation of technical language and phraseology.

This is the day when one may decide to begin with a discussion of "associative sequences" in children's thinking. The consultant who makes this presentation must make it with the awareness that many of the participants will not have had professional training in theories of learning or of thinking. As the writer views the average pre-school child, this is the method of thinking or learning which appears most common to the child of that age; however, there is an inherent danger in using such a term as the "average pre-school child". Undoubtedly many subject children, with the probable exception of those who are mentally handicapped, will be able to form concepts; others will be able to solve problems; and others will be able to think critically and creatively. Fully six workshop or staff training hours may well be devoted to discussions in the general area of how pre-school children think and learn. A two-hour session to deal with group or individual questions will be most

desirable and should be most beneficial. The close of this day will not find that theories of learning have been exhausted. In fact, some such theories may have been little more than mentioned; however, hopefully the participants will have been made aware of the fact that there are ideas or formulas for learning which may be addressed to some form or organization for action.

The initial two hours of the fourth day should be devoted to the general area of school and community relations with great emphasis upon working with parents. The nature of the instruction involved in all centers will require a high degree of parental involvement. Four hours of the fourth day should be devoted to an exploratory workshop in which materials and equipment particularly suitable for pre-school children are displayed and demonstrated. Admittedly the materials and equipment to be presented will for the most part have been developed for the benefit of normal pre-school children. The particular nature of the handicap for which the centers have been established will govern the utility of the materials and equipment in each particular center. There are many items which will be usable in their original form for both handicapped and normal children, or which with slight modifications would be usable for handicapped children of pre-school age.

Time does not permit a listing of materials, equipment, or media to be displayed and demonstrated; however, the Instructional Materials Center of the Special Education Department at the

University of Texas is an ample reservoir for such things. Among the items of equipment to be shown, one would hope for:

1. Sixteen millimeter projector.
2. Eight millimeter projector.
3. Cassette recorder.
4. Cassette player.
5. Record player.
6. Tape recorder.
7. Filmstrip projector.
8. Listening stations.
9. Opaque projector.
10. Carousel slide projector (or comparable model).

The above list is only a partial one. It purposely omits such items as overhead projectors because of their infrequent use in completely individualized programs. It omits such sophisticated items as "The Talking Typewriter" which may be unavailable to most centers. It includes no television equipment which, like the overhead projector, could be used individually, but which is seldom so used.

Four hours of the fourth day will be scarcely enough to discuss and demonstrate equipment and materials available. Time merely does not permit a more in-depth approach. The two hour follow-up session for group or individual questions will permit a degree of specialization on the part of the participants.

The final day of the staff training program should find all of the consultants utilized during the week available for private conferences with the individual participants. This is the time when they may attempt to fill in blank spaces for individuals which have been created during the previous four days, and this is the time when they may recognize the degree of sophistication of the professional experience and training of the participants.

The forty hours of staff training might be represented by the following schedule.

MONDAY

8:00	Development of Goals for the Centers
11:00- 12:00 Noon	Lunch
12:00- 3:00	Discussion of Evaluation and Diagnostic Instruments
3:00- 5:00	Individual and Group Questions on Previous Two Sessions

TUESDAY

8:00- 10:00	Individuality of Children (Physical)
10:00- 12:00	Individuality of Children (Psychological)
12:00- 1:00	Lunch
1:00- 3:00	Individuality of Children (Social)
3:00- 5:00	Individual and Group Questions on Three Preceding Sessions

WEDNESDAY

8:00-11:00	How Children Think and Learn
11:00-12:00	Lunch
1:00-3:00	How Children Think and Learn (Continued)
3:00-5:00	Individual and Group Questions on Two Preceding Sessions

THURSDAY

8:00-10:00	School and Community Relations
10:00-12:00	Materials and Equipment
12:00-1:00	Lunch
1:00-3:00	Materials and Equipment (Continued)
3:00-5:00	Individual and Group Questions on Three Preceding Sessions

FRIDAY

8:00-12:00	Individual and Group Appointments With Consultative Staff
12:00-1:00	Lunch
1:00-5:00	Individual and Group Appointments With Consultative Staff

With forty hours of staff or workshop training, what have we hopefully accomplished? We have developed some goals or purposes which within certain limitations are acceptable for all of the centers thereby creating a community of purpose to which all centers may subscribe thereby creating a cohesiveness that should prove advantageous in a subsequent exchange of methods, materials, and ideas. We have also built a foundation for understanding the purposes behind the evaluative and diagnostic activities of the centers which we expect to be communicated to the entire staff of each center. We have pointed out certain behavioral observations indicative of various types of individual differences in children which should prove a base for individual courses of action designed to recognize and build upon the uniqueness of each child. We have provided a brief background in how the pre-school child learns and thereby established a base for logical action designed to accomodate learning experiences aware of and sensitive to the several theories of learning. We have set forth a frame of reference for relations with the community and particularly the parents of children housed in the centers. We have demonstrated and displayed an array of materials and equipment from which participants may select or modify to fit the needs of their particular centers. Finally and most promising of all, we have provided opportunities for face to face, one to one discussions of specific problems or quandaries with a consultative staff of eminence and ability.

Forty hours have been devoted to the facts, the concepts, the theories of educating the pre-school child with no attention whatsoever to the handicaps which are an essential factor of each center. It is not the province of a general school administrator, such as the writer, to delineate a staff training program which would provide for the staff of a center with respect to particular types of handicaps. The recommendation for forty hours staff training which did not recognize that centers are dealing with handicapped children was based upon the premise that there are more areas of commonality among all pre-school children than there are areas of differences.

With the same premise applied only to handicapped children there are areas of differences; the writer recommends that approximately twenty hours of staff or workshop training be provided in the general area of working with handicapped children with no distinction as to specific type of handicap. One would assume that time would be devoted to the desirable attitude of the teacher of handicapped children, the psychological approach, the expectations, the role of the teacher. One might assume that there are basic differences in the children as compared to the normal child which need to be combatted, modified, adjusted, or in some instances emphasized. These decisions must be left to the specialists in the field. With the constant awareness of the limitations of time, the writer suggests approximately twenty clock hours of staff training within the general framework suggested in which all would participate.

To complete the program, the writer suggests that a final twenty clock hours be devoted to staff training programs related to specific disabilities. Participants would select the area of disability pertinent to the center with which they were associated. In instances where centers deal with more than one specific disability a selection would have to be made or an additional staff member would need to attend. Consultants in this phase of the program should be selected for areas of disability in which the consultants had special competencies.

In closing it appears only fair to admit that personal bias has contributed to the suggestions made in this monograph. The writer is, first, constantly amazed at the inability or unwillingness of teachers to utilize the results of extensive testing programs for the purpose of diagnosing and planning for children. Second, the writer is unable to understand the refusal of teachers to capitalize upon the uniqueness of children to provide for their optimum learning. Third, the writer cannot comprehend the refusal of consultants and specialists to step down from the security of a highly theoretical plane and discuss the solution of learning problems in words of one or a few syllables. The activities incorporated or suggested by the proposal for staff training will hopefully suggest correcting the first and second enumerated shortcomings and, if the staff training is to be successful, will require the elimination of the third.

V I T A

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